

A photograph of a person and a camel in a desert. The person, on the left, is lying on their stomach on the sand, wearing sunglasses and a patterned shirt. The camel, on the right, is also lying down, its head resting on the ground. The background is a clear blue sky and a sandy desert landscape. A semi-transparent teal banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "LET'S REVIEW".

LET'S REVIEW





## SIMPLIFY THE SCENE

When you look at a scene with your naked eye, your brain quickly picks out subjects of interest. But the camera doesn't discriminate - it captures everything in front of it, which can lead to a cluttered, messy picture with no clear focal point.

Remember, don't let your camera rule you. You rule the camera.

What you need to do is choose your subject, then select a focal length or camera viewpoint that makes it the centre of attention in the frame. You can't always keep other objects out of the picture, so try to keep them in the background or make them part of the story.

Shadows, silhouettes, textures and patterns are all elements that work quite well in simple photo compositions.

The simpler the shot the bigger the impact.



# FILL THE FRAME

When you're shooting a large-scale scene, it can be hard to know how big your subject should be in the frame, and how much you should zoom in.

In fact, leaving too much empty space in a scene is the most widespread compositional mistake. It makes your subject smaller than it needs to be and can also leave viewers confused about what they're supposed to be looking within your image frame.

To avoid these problems you should zoom in to fill the frame, or move closer to the subject in question. The first approach flattens the perspective of the shot and makes it easier to control or exclude what's shown in the background, but physically moving closer can give you a more interesting take on things.







## HORIZONTAL OR VERTICAL

It's easy to get stuck in a rut and take every picture with the camera held horizontally. In fact, I was taught to shoot this way and only this way. It took time for me to think of turning my camera vertically.

Try turning it to get a vertical shot instead, adjusting your position or the zoom setting as you experiment with the new style.



## AVOID THE MIDDLE

When you are new to photography, it's tempting to put your subject right in the centre of the frame. However, this produces rather static, boring pictures. One of the ways to counteract this is to use the Rule of Thirds, where you split the image up into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, and try to place your subject on one of these imaginary lines or intersections.

Let me say, however, this is an overrated approach.

Instead, move your subject away from the centre and get a feel for how it can be balanced with everything else in the scene, including any areas of contrasting color or light.

There are no hard and fast rules about achieving this kind of visual balance, but you'll quickly learn to rely on your instincts - trust that you'll know when something just looks right.







# LEADING LINES

A poorly composed photograph will leave your viewers unsure about where to look, and their attention might drift aimlessly around the scene without finding a clear focal point.

However, you can use lines to control the way people's eyes move around the picture.

Converging lines give a strong sense of perspective and three-dimensional depth, drawing you into an image. Curved lines can lead you on a journey around the frame, leading you towards the main subject.

Lines exist everywhere, in the form of walls, fences, roads, buildings and telephone wires. They can also be implied, perhaps by the direction in which an off-centre subject is looking.



# DUTCH TILT

Horizontal lines lend a static, calm feel to a picture, while vertical ones often suggest permanence and stability. To introduce a feeling of drama, movement or uncertainty, look for diagonal lines instead. Better yet, tilt your camera.

You can need nothing more than a shift in position or focal length to get diagonal lines - wider angles of view tend to introduce diagonal lines because of the increased perspective; with wide-angle lenses you're more likely to tilt the camera up or down to get more of a scene in.

You can also introduce diagonal lines artificially, using the 'Dutch Tilt' technique. You simply tilt the camera as you take the shot. This can be very effective, though it doesn't suit every shot and is best used sparingly

The Dutch Tilt can be used for dramatic effect and helps portray unease, disorientation, frantic or desperate action, intoxication, madness, anger, despair, etc....







## SPACE TO MOVE

Even though photographs themselves are static, they can still convey a strong sense of movement. When we look at pictures, we see what's happening and tend to look ahead - this creates a feeling of imbalance or unease if your subject has nowhere to move except out of the frame.

You don't just get this effect with moving subjects, either. For example, when you look at a portrait you tend to follow someone's gaze, and they need an area to look into

For both types of shot, then, there should always be a little more space ahead of the subject than behind it.



# BACKGROUNDS

Don't just concentrate on your subject - look at what's happening in the background, too. This ties in with simplifying the scene and filling the frame. You can't usually exclude the background completely, of course, but you can control it.

You'll often find that changing your position is enough to replace a cluttered background with one that complements your subject nicely. Or you can use a wide lens aperture and a longer focal length to throw the background out of focus.

It all depends on whether the background is part of the story you're trying to tell with the photo.







## COLOR

Bright primary colors really attract the eye, especially when they're contrasted with a complementary hue. But there are other ways of creating color contrasts - by including a bright splash of color against a monochromatic background, for example.

You don't need strong color contrasts to create striking pictures, though.

Scenes consisting almost entirely of a single hue can be very effective. And those with a limited palette of harmonious shades, such as softly lit landscapes, often make great pictures.

The key is to be really selective about how you isolate and frame your subjects to exclude unwanted colors.



# NOTES



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